

The Daily Movie Magazine

CLOSE-UPS of the MOVIE GAME

By HENRY M. NEELY

They Don't Want Ego in the Movies

HERE'S an odd thing about this business of going around interviewing people for a newspaper. After years of it you get to hate an appointment where the victim knows he is going to be interviewed. He usually has the stage all set to make a proper impression through you on your readers, and the stuff he tells you is always well rehearsed and not a bit true to his real character.

It's only when you get to know a man pretty well personally and have opportunities to chat informally with him, with no thought of the typewriter and the printing press in his mind, that you get to the real man and find out what your readers want to know.

All of which heavy thinking was caused yesterday when I was putting away some accumulated photographs and came across one of Ralph Graves.

You know Ralph Graves. You know him mostly as the hero—if you could call it a hero part—in Griffith's "Dream Street." He was the tough brother who goes through a process of soul regeneration in his love for the little dancing girl.

And, if you'll recall that scene where he rises in a hot fury to thrash his weakling brother, and suddenly, at the memory of their mother, changes a wicked upper-cut from a caress, throwing the arm about the brother's neck and hugging him in a touching surge of love and protection—if you'll recall that scene, you'll admit that Graves is a real actor.

But he won't admit it himself. Gradually, as you get to know him better of stage, you pick up bits of his life and his philosophy that are illuminating commentaries on the things that advance or retard a man in the moving-picture business.

AND he has come to one conclusion that every aspirant to movie fame would do well to post up on the mirrors. It amounts to this: You need not hope for success on the screen as long as you think you are good and try to impress your superiority on other people. You must first get rid of your ego; you must realize that this new art is bigger than you will ever be.

GRAVES was born twenty-two years ago in Cleveland. His father was a wealthy steel manufacturer, and Ralph grew up with the idea that he himself was considerably better than most people whom he met. He will tell you this with an amused and somewhat contemptuous smile. Yes; he thought he was pretty good.

He wouldn't go to college, as his father wanted him to do. He thought he was so handsome and so clever that all he had to do was to show himself in a moving-picture studio and directors would simply fall over themselves trying to get him to sign contracts.

So he broke with his family and went to Chicago. Even after many weeks doing nothing he didn't realize that he was too much "up stage" in his methods of applying for jobs. He does realize it now, and he loves to tell the ridiculous things he must have cut in those days—"a cheap actor," as he calls himself, with all the airs of the president of the company.

He managed to get a job with Essanay at \$3 a day, and saved enough to take him to New York. He had concluded that movie people in Chicago didn't know a good thing when they saw it. The New York directors would have him in sight, all the stars, fearing he would supplant them in public favor, handed together and put the sign of the double cross on him. It must have been some sort of deep laid plot. Anyhow, he was always too tall or too short or too light or too dark or too something.

And he couldn't get a job. Then followed fourteen weeks—broke. He lived in a cheap boarding house. "I used to put the bathroom rug on my landlady's sewing table to press my collars," he told me once in a reminiscent mood.

BUT the ego of youth dies hard. Fourteen weeks of neglect and failure didn't do much to take anything out of him. He only proved what he had suspected—that the moving-picture business is in the hands of a lot of duds and dummies who hold their jobs through pull and not through merit.

You'll agree with him, won't you—you disappointed young aspirants who have tried to get in and failed?

FINALLY Graves became desperate. He decided to act like an ordinary mortal. So he went to the World studios, and instead of posing as the president of the concern, he said: "For heaven's sake, give me a job. I'm broke. I've been bluffing so far and telling you how good I was. But I'm not. Put me to work, will you?"

And they did. As he progressed and got to small parts, his old good opinion of himself rose again to the surface and he began to swagger. You've seen that swagger in "Dream Street" as the tough guy of the neighborhood. He says he actually used to go around the studio almost that way.

"I was a fresh kid," he says, "and I certainly did have a good opinion of myself."

One day he saw Maurice Tourneur watching him closely. Can you imagine a kid being so full of ego that he didn't realize what that meant from a director as big as Tourneur? Graves didn't. He resented the stare.

"Who is that person over there?" he demanded so loudly that the great man heard him.

"Hush—sh!" some one warned. "That's Tourneur."

"Yes?" Graves queried, very much up-stage, "and who the so-and-so is this Tourneur?"

Tourneur heard him and laughed. Which shows what a really big man Tourneur is. He went over to Graves.

"Do you really think you can act?" he asked him.

And Graves was wise enough then to get his perspective.

"No," he admitted humbly. "But I'd like to have a chance to try."

And Tourneur gave him the chance. He gave the boy a big part with Constance Binney in "Sporting Life."

BUT Graves wants to give you young aspirants one bit of advice. Don't expect to find a Maurice Tourneur to overlook your fan-boastful ego. You won't meet his kind often.

THIS led Graves to the West Coast and a good contract with Universal. "I thought I was cheating them to take it," he says. Which shows that the lesson learned from Tourneur was sinking in.

But only for a while. His grand manner soon came back. He decided he would give Griffith the great privilege of signing him on. So he put on his tea-clothes—"You know how a kid would do," he explained—and went to see the director.

"Griffith came up to speak to me," he said, "but I was looking in a mirror. Griffith turned on his heel and walked out. Then I got wise to myself and relaxed—but he was gone."

He wasn't entirely gone, though, as Graves found out later. The director had gone outside and was looking at the boy through a window. And he saw him relax.

"But he knew I was too much stuck on myself at that time," says Graves, "and he didn't sign me."

Later, Griffith saw "Sporting Life" and sent for Graves. And then began the long process of the total elimination of the ego.

Naturally, there followed offers of starring contracts, and the boy began to think again that he was pretty good. He thought he would hold these contracts over Griffith's head to force better terms. He wired Griffith about them.

"I have nothing to do with your future," came the answer. "If you think best, accept offers."

AND right here, the Graves ego received its deathblow. He saw himself as he was. He knew he could do nothing with bluff. He went right to Griffith and made a clean breast of it.

"I'd rather be with you and get your training than star with the best of them," he said.

And, in telling me about it not long ago, he added: "Right there, Griffith started work on one of the world's worst actors (I was so bad that I couldn't loosen up a bit) and he first taught me humility in the face of a great art. Then he taught me to control my nerves. Anything I have learned about acting, I have very neatly stolen from that quiet gentleman over there in the blue suit (pointing to Griffith, who was wandering about the studio and, in the three years I have been with him, I have never once heard him raise his voice nor have I seen him when he was not able to smile).

"His name shouldn't be David Wark Griffith. It should be David Work."

GRACE M. PETERS—Constance Binney's film company, 315 East Forty-third street, New York City.

JAMES WITT, Amateur—I would advise you to subscribe to the Moving Picture World, published by the "Champion" Publishing Company, 510 Fifth avenue, New York City. Price of subscription is \$3.00 a year. Try to market your play in this country if possible. The Famous Players-Lasky Corporation maintains a British unit in England. They may possibly be interested in your racing drama.

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BEAUTY CONTEST WINNERS ARE ACTING NOW AT BETZWOOD



THE three girls who won our Movie Beauty Contest are shown here in two scenes in the Toonerville Trolley Comedy they are now making at Betzwood.

In the upper picture, Madeline Starhill, of 5806 Cedar avenue, is the power behind the pump, Eugenie Brew, of the Hotel Normandie, is the holder of the glass, and Marion Heist, of 405 South Forty-second street, is looking on.

In the lower picture, Miss Heist, behind the counter of the country store, is gossiping with her two friends, but a little suspicious of Miss Starhill's help-yourself policy with the cracker-box. Miss Heist looks as though she'd like to help herself, too.

IT HAS been a great week for the three girls who won our Movie Beauty Contest. They have been working at Betzwood all week and they now begin to feel that they are veteran actresses.

They aren't camera shy any more and they have learned to dash from the train to their dressing rooms and get their costumes and make-up on in about one-fifth the time it took them Monday.

The comedy they are working in is to be called "The Toonerville Hold-Up." The three girls are to be the most pathetic victims of a bold, bad tramp who overhears a plot for a fake hold-up of the Skipper and his passengers, and decides to make it a real one.

All of the stuff so far has been out "on location," at the end of the Phoenixville car line, about five miles from Betzwood. Next week they will have experience under the artificial lights of the studio.

They are having a great time. At first it was torture to get out of bed in the morning in time to have breakfast and catch the 8:05 train, but each one says to herself, "I'm a walking gold mine," and they show up at the studio promptly at 9 o'clock.

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FAMOUS STAR IN OLD MELODRAMAS NOW ON SCREEN

AMONG old favorites of the stage now appearing in motion pictures are recalled with greater affection by theatre-goers of a generation ago than Maggie Holloway Fisher. At various times Miss Fisher's name was associated with such important figures as James Hackett, Richard Mansfield, Lillian Russell and many other women stars. Now she has become a favorite with film devotees and her recent appearance in "Beach of Dreams" recalled memories of many of her old admirers of the days when she trod the boards and her art had much to do with the success of many of the old-time productions.

Miss Fisher's childhood was spent on the stage in England and Ireland, where her father and mother, Joseph and Grace Holloway, were then noted theatre-goers. Five years ago Miss Fisher came to the United States at the request of Charles Frohman and her recent appearance in "Beach of Dreams" recalled memories of many of her old admirers of the days when she trod the boards and her art had much to do with the success of many of the old-time productions.

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Five Years on Broadway



LEWIS STONE

Lewis Stone scarcely left New York in five years, where Broadway theatre-goers acclaimed his finished acting in the leading role in such plays as "Inside the Lines," "The Misleading Lady," "Bunny," "Where Poppies Bloom" and "The Small Town Girl." He will be seen in "The Northern Trail," from the stories of James Oliver Curwood. "The Wilderness Maid," adapted and directed by Bertram Bracken. Photoplay lovers will remember Mr. Stone's work in leading roles in such successful productions as "The River Endless," "Ben Hur," "Held by the Enemy," "Milestones," "The Concert," "The Golden Square" and "Muffled Drums."

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